

Frederick C. Robie House  
5757 South Woodlawn Avenue  
at 58th Street  
Chicago  
Cook County  
Illinois

HABS No. ILL-1005

HABS  
ILL,  
16-CHIG,  
33-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

*Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings*

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
801 19th Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C.

ADDITIONAL  
FOLLOWS...

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. ILL-1005  
HABS  
ILL,  
16-CHIG,  
33-

## FREDERICK C. ROBIE HOUSE

- Location: 5757 South Woodlawn Avenue, northeast corner of Woodlawn Avenue and Fifty-eighth Street, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.
- Present Owner: University of Chicago.
- Present Use: Adlai E. Stevenson Institute of International Affairs of the University of Chicago.
- Statement of Significance: The Robie House is one of the best known early works of Frank Lloyd Wright. It has been cited as a Landmark by the Commission on Chicago Architectural Landmarks: "In recognition of the creation of the Prairie House -- a home organized around the great hearth where interior space, under wide sweeping roofs, opens to the outdoors. The bold interplay of horizontal planes about the chimney mass, and the structurally expressive piers and windows, established a new form of domestic design."

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: The chain of title for the property is recorded in Book 353A, County Recorder's Office, Cook County, Chicago.

Description of Property: Lot 16, and the south 10' of lot 17, Block 71 of Gray and Gaylord's subdivision of Block 71 and west half of 62.

Fred C. Robie acquired the property in two separate transactions on April 8, 1908 (Document 4206998) and May 19, 1908 (Document 4206999). Robie sold the property August 6, 1912 (Document 5020028) to Harry D. Michaels, and it was shortly thereafter acquired by Marshall B. Wilbur, November 23, 1912, from Ellen W. Taylor (Document 5086325). Wilbur continued to own the property until January 9, 1926 when it went to the Chicago Theological Seminary (Document 9302815). The Chicago Theological Seminary held the property until August 14, 1958 when it was sold to Webb and Knapp Co., the real estate firm of William Zeckendorf (Document 17289619). Webb and Knapp Co. gave the property to the University of Chicago February 15, 1963 (Documents 18721237, 18721238).

2. Date of erection: The house, which fits very exactly on the lot, could hardly have been designed before the property was acquired in April and May, 1908. The earliest entry in the ledger of H. B. Barnard, the contractor, is April 15, 1909. Work must have been substantially finished by the end of May, 1910 when regular entries in the ledger cease; the final entry being January 21, 1911. Marginal notes in the Barnard ledger indicate the progress of the work: August 21, 1909, roughing finished; September 22, ready for lathers; October 5, electricians still working; October 26, begun trimming.
3. Architect: Frank Lloyd Wright.
4. Builder, suppliers: H. B. Barnard Company, 38 South Dearborn, Chicago. Ledger is attached.
5. Drawings: Blueprints of original working drawings are in the possession of the original contractor, H. B. Barnard Company, 38 South Dearborn Street, Chicago. These are on microfilm in the Burnham Library, Art Institute of Chicago, roll 15, frames 23-31. The set includes the following sheets of drawings: 1) Ground floor plan, scale 1/4" equals 1'-0". 2) Second floor plan. 3) Third floor plan. 4) Elevation--south. 5) Elevation--east and west. 6) Cross section, scale 3/4" equals 1'-0". 7) Interior details. 8) Interior details.
6. Alterations and additions: The following is from "Frederick C. Robie House, Frank Lloyd Wright, Architect," The Prairie School Review, IV, No. 4 (Fourth Quarter, 1967), pp. 10-19:

"In their planning for the use of the Robie House, the Institute and their architects wished to achieve an environment for conference and seminar use while providing offices for staff and fellows of the Institute. Lack of funds prevented a complete restoration and, as the house was structurally sound, it was decided to bring it up to modern code requirements, do a thorough cleaning, and to provide needed facilities by careful use of furnishings, new as well as original...(page 15)

"Many built-in furnishings and fittings are missing such as the dining room buffet and the inglenook seat beside the living room fireplace. On the exterior, the unfortunate tuckpointing performed in recent years must be removed, and redone to re-establish the proper horizontal emphasis to the house. The east garden wall should be restored to its original height and the addition to the garage must be removed." (page 18)

B. Sources of Information:

1. Works dealing with the Robie House specifically:

Andrews, Wayne. Architecture, Ambition and Americans.  
New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947. p. 233.  
General material.

Ashbee, Charles Robert. Frank Lloyd Wright, eine Studie  
zu seiner Wuerdigung. Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth, 1911.  
Binder's Title: Frank Lloyd Wright, ausgefuehrte  
Bauten. Pictures and plans pp. 112-115.  
General material, old views of interior and  
exterior.

Ausgefuehrte Bauten und Entwuerfe. Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth,  
1910.  
Text and plates. Plates and plans. Important  
early monograph.

"Buildings by Frank Lloyd Wright in Six Middle Western  
States," Chicago: Burnham Library of Architecture,  
The Art Institute of Chicago, 1954. p. 2.  
Catalogue.

Chicago: Historic Houses, Robie House, Newspaper Clip-  
pings: Chicago Daily News, December 11, 1961; Tribune,  
June 9, 1963, February 3, 1963; Sun Times, February 5,  
1963. Pictures. Located in the Library of the  
Chicago Historical Society.  
Preservation of Robie House controversy.

Condit, Carl W. The Rise of the Skyscraper. Chicago:  
The University of Chicago Press, 1952. p. 240.  
Reference to Robie House.

Drexler, Arthur. The Drawings of Frank Lloyd Wright.  
New York: Horizon Press, 1962.  
Pictures pl. 29, 289, 290.

Drury, John. Old Chicago Houses. Chicago: The University  
of Chicago Press, 1941. pp. 494-497.  
Summarizing material.

Farr, Finis. Frank Lloyd Wright, a Biography. New York:  
Charles Scribners' Sons, 1961. pp. 100-104, 225.  
Pictures pls. 8, 9. Bibliography.  
A good description of Wright's dealings with Robie  
and the house itself.

Fletcher, Sir Banister. A History of Architecture on the  
Comparative Method. London: The Athlone Press, 1961.

p. 1144. Picture p. 1142.

Reference to and description of Robie House in  
general historical survey.

"Florence. Mostra di Frank Lloyd Wright. Catalogo  
itinerario. Palazzo Strozzi 24 giugno - settembre  
1951." Florence: 1951. p. 3.  
Catalogue.

"Frank Lloyd Wright: A pictorial record of architectural  
progress." Boston: Institute of Contemporary Art,  
1940. Picture and plan.  
Catalogue.

Frank Lloyd Wright, Architect American. Paris: Albert  
Morance, n.d. Picture pl. 7. Plan p. 4.

"Frank Lloyd Wright, 60 Jahre Architektur. Veranstalter:  
Ausstellungsleitung Muenchen E. V. Haus der Kunst.  
16. Mai bis 15. Juni 1952." Munchen: Sueddeutscher  
Verlag GMBH, 1952. p. 55. Picture p. 42.  
Exhibition catalogue.

Fries, H. de. Frank Lloyd Wright Aus dem Lebenswerke  
eines Architekten. Berlin: Verlag Ernst Pollak, 1926.  
Pictures p. 28.

Giedion, Sigfried. Space, Time, and Architecture.  
Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954. pp. 406-  
409. Picture p. 407.  
General material and description.

Gosswiller, Richard E. "Frank Lloyd Wright," Inland,  
No. 29 (Winter 1960). pp. 14-19. Robie House p. 18.  
General material.

Gutheim, Frederick (ed.). Frank Lloyd Wright on Architecture,  
Selected Writings 1894-1940. New York: Duell, Sloan  
and Pearce, 1941. p. 75. Bibliography.  
General material, reference to Robie House.

Hitchcock, Henry Russell. Frank Lloyd Wright. Paris:  
Cahiers d'art, 1928. Picture.  
A collection of plates of Wright's works.

In the Nature of Materials.  
The Buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright. New York:  
Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1942. pp. 40, 79, 102.  
Pl. 164, 166. Plans pl. 165.  
Reference to Robie House.

- Kaufmann, Edgar (ed.). Frank Lloyd Wright, An American Architecture. New York: Horizon Press, 1955. Sketch for garage gates, Robie House p. 224.  
General material.
- Kaufmann, Edgar and Raeburn, Ben. Frank Lloyd Wright: Writings and Buildings. New York: Horizon Press, 1960. Picture p. 109. Plan p. 105.  
General material.
- Kienitz, John Fabian. "Fifty-two years of Frank Lloyd Wright's Progressivism, 1893-1945," Wisconsin Magazine of History, XXIX, No. 1 (September 1945), pp. 61-71.  
Robie House pp. 64-65.  
Description and interpretation.
- Lloyd Wright's Robie House. Bibliography. Located in the Pamphlet File, Burnham Library.
- Manson, Grant Carpenter. Frank Lloyd Wright to 1910. New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1958. pp. 35, 79, 126, 154n, 171, 187, 198-201. Plates pp. 35, 198-200. Plan p. 200. Bibliography.  
Description of Robie House.
- 
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Frank Lloyd Wright's Work Before 1910." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1940.
- "Masters of four Arts, Wright, Maillol, Picasso, Stravinsky: an exhibition May 4-May 29 and a concert May 7... 1943." Harvard University, William Hayes Fogg Art Museum.  
Exhibition catalogue.
- "Modern Architecture; international exhibition, New York, February 10 to March 23, 1932, Museum of Modern Art." New York: 1932. Picture p. 51. Plan p. 50.  
Bibliography.  
Exhibition catalogue.
- Moser, Werner M. Frank Lloyd Wright: Sechzig Jahre Lebendige Architektur. Winterthur: Verlag Buchdruckerei Winterthur A. G., 1952. p. 12. Picture and plan p. 13.  
Description of Robie House.
- Oud, Jacobus J. P. "Architectonische Beschouwing." De Stijl (February 1918).  
Article on the Robie House.
- Replinger, John G. An Introduction to the Architecture of the Prairie School: Maher, Wright, Griffin. Chicago: 1951. Microfilm collection, Burnham Library.

Schuyler, Montgomery. "An Architectural Pioneer: Review of the Portfolios Containing the Works of Frank Lloyd Wright," Architectural Record, XXI (April 1912). pp. 427-436.

General material.

Scully, Vincent, Jr. Frank Lloyd Wright. New York: George Braziller, Inc. pp. 21-22. pls. 39, 40, 41. General material.

\_\_\_\_\_. Modern Architecture. New York: George Braziller, 1961. pp. 21-22. pls. 41, 42. Description of Robie House.

"Sixty years of living architecture, The Work of Frank Lloyd Wright. June 2-July 25, 1954." Los Angeles: The Municipal Art Patrons and Art Commission of Los Angeles, 1954. Picture. Exhibition catalogue.

"Sixty Years of Living Architecture, The work of Frank Lloyd Wright, Oct. 9- Nov. 15, 1953. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum." New York: 1953. Exhibition catalogue.

Tselos, Dimitri. "Exotic Influences in the Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright," Magazine of Art, XLVII, No. 4 (April 1953), pp. 160-169, 184. Robie House p. 163. Japanese influence on Prairie House.

Wijdeveld, H. Th. and others. The Life Work of the American Architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Santpoort, Holland: C. A. Mees, 1925. Pictures and plans pp. 25-26. An early survey of Wright's work.

Wright, Frank Lloyd. A Testament. New York: Horizon Press, 1957. p. 76. Pictures and plan pp. 76-79. General material.

Wright, Frank Lloyd. Clippings in Scrapbook. pp. 46, 69. Located in the Pamphlet File, Burnham Library.

Wright, Frank Lloyd, Chicago Illinois. Robie (F.C.) House. Clippings dealing with the Robie House Controversy from 1957, '58, '62 issues of the Chicago Tribune, Daily News, Sun Times, University of Chicago. Maroon, Hyde Park Herald, New York Times, and Herald Tribune. Letters and minutes from The Committee for the Preservation of Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House. Pamphlet file, Burnham Library.

Wright, Lovanna Lloyd. Architecture, Man in possession of His Earth. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1962. pp. 23, 24, 25, 84, 85, 99. Pictures p. 23, 24, 84, 98. Plan p. 84.  
General biographical survey of Wright's work.

2. Important general works about Wright:

Blake, Peter. The Master Builders. New York: Knopf, 1960.

Brown, Milton, and Hitchcock, H. R. Jr. "Wright's influence abroad," Parnassus, XII (December 1940), pp. 11-15, 37.

Brownell, Baker and Wright, Frank Lloyd. Architecture and Modern Life. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1937.

Cousens, Gertrude. "Frank Lloyd Wright; an Annotated Bibliography." Unpublished Master's Thesis, Columbia University School of Library Service, 1938.

Doyle, Laurett. "Frank Lloyd Wright. An annotated bibliography." Submitted as a term paper, Course 46-Bibliography (River Forest, Illinois: 1939).

House Beautiful, XCVIII, No. 11 (November 1955).  
Entire issue devoted to Frank Lloyd Wright.

Karpel, Bernard. "What men have written about Frank Lloyd Wright; a bibliography arranged by decades from 1900 to 1955." New York: 1955.  
Compiled for House Beautiful Magazine, November 1955 issue.

Oud, J. J. P. "Der Einfluss von Frank Lloyd Wright auf die Architektur Europas," Hollandische Architektur. Muenchen: Albert Langen, 1926. pp. 78-83.

Spencer, Robert C., Jr. "The Work of Frank Lloyd Wright," Architectural Review, VII (June 1900). pp. 61-72.

Wright, Frank Lloyd. An Autobiography. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1943.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Future of Architecture. New York: Horizon Press, 1953.

\_\_\_\_\_. "In the Cause of Architecture," Architectural Record, XXIII (March 1908), pp. 155-221.

Modern Architecture, The Kahn  
Lectures 1930. Princeton: Princeton University  
Press, 1931.

The Natural House. New York:  
Horizon Press, 1954.

C. Supplementary material:

Manuscript ledger of H. B. Barnard Company, 38 South Dearborn  
Street, Chicago for 1909, pp. 2, 4, 14, 22, 44.

F. C. Robie 58 and Woodlawn

		LUMBER				
		FEET	PRICE	LABOR	MILLWORK	HDW. MISC.
1909						
April	15	Gee Roofing Mfg. Co.				6.90
"	27	"				5.75
"	27	Frank Pearson blueprint				.10
"	27	Arthur Meagher /carpenter/				28.35
"	30	Frank Pearson Blue Print				1.71
May	1	Orr and Lockett			2.35	
April	22	Rittenhouse and Embree	500	9.00		
"	29	South Halsted St. Iron Works				10.75
"	29	"				13.30
May	3	Telephone toll				5.25
"	7	Frank Pearson				1.39
"	7	Chicago Sash Door & Blind			150.	
"	8	Colonial Fireplace Company				22.25
"	4	Wm. B. Hough Company				4.65
"	6	Orr and Lockett			1.25	
"	7	Putty				1.75
"	9	Orr and Lockett			2.00	
"	12	Colonial Fireplace Company				1.50
"		Richards & Kelly Mfg. Co.				40.00
"	11	South Halsted St. Iron				4.23
"	3	Rittenhouse and Embree	1200	22.02		
"	10	"	1766	37.41		
"	17	Frank Pearson				2.01
"	4	Wm. B. Hough Co.				.50
"	18	Pay Roll		48.55		
"	15	Wm. B. Hough Co.				3.91
"	22	Thomlinson & Riley				1,000.00
"	12	Rittenhouse & Embree			.98	
"	14	"	3884	80.22		
"	24	Arthur Meagher				2,500.00
"	15	Wm. B. Hough Co.				.50
"	25	Pay Roll		54.50		
"	8	Frank Pearson				.10
"	25	"				.77

			FEET	LUMBER PRICE	LABOR	MILLWORK	HDW.	MISC.
May	29	Pay Roll			121.15			
"	17	Rittenhouse & Embree	1800	34.20				
"	22	"	644	13.30				
"	25	"	2728	57.34				
"	23	Orr & Lockett					8.25	
"	27	"					6.15	
"	29	Chicago Sash Door & Blind				180.00		
June	4	Thomlinson & Riley						500.00
"	5	Pay Roll			68.22			
May	29	Rittenhouse & Embree	233	4.89				
June	7	South Halsted St. Iron						11.75
May	27	"						756.95
June	2	Rittenhouse & Embree	4296					82.60
"	12	Pay Roll			52.25			
"	9	Wm. B. Hough Co.						10.04
"	18	Arthur Meagher						1,000.00
"	8	Rittenhouse & Embree	1862	39.72				
"	10	"	3541	72.31				
"	19	Pay Roll			106.25			
"	21	Rittenhouse & Embree	3230	62.69				
"	9	Wm. B. Hough Co.						.75
"	26	Pay Roll			140.23			
"	19	Rittenhouse & Embree	2136	40.81				
"	22	"	3376	65.73				
"	30	South Halsted Street Iron						5.07
"	25	Rittenhouse & Embree	2900	55.10				
"	30	Orr & Lockett Hdw.					2.75	
"	30	"					7.10	
July	3	Pay Roll			178.50			
June	29	Rittenhouse & Embree	250	5.00				
"	30	"	2900	67.60				
July	6	N.N. Gross & Son						27.50
"	6	O'Kirk Hdw.						1.96
"	9	Thomlinson & Riley & Co.						500.00
"	9	Arthur Meagher						1,000.00
"	9	Telephone Toll						1.65
"	10	Pay Roll			146.25			
"	12	Gilbert Wilson					4.83	
"	6	Rittenhouse & Embree	580	11.02				
"	9	"	655	12.61				
"	13	"	550	10.45				
"	17	Pay Roll			160.15			
"	17	Gilbert Wilson					1.85	
"	15	Rittenhouse & Embree	440	8.36				
"	17	"	550	10.45				
"	21	"	1142	22.08				
"	24	Pay Roll			144.20			
"	20	Orr & Lockett Hdw. Co.					2.65	

			FEET	LUMBER PRICE	LABOR	MILLWORK	HDW.	MISC.
July	24	Rittenhouse & Embree	1033	20.19				
"	31	Pay Roll			131.25			
"	27	Rittenhouse & Embree	883	16.78				
"	29	Orr & Lockett					8.23	
"	31	Rittenhouse & Embree	200	3.74				
"	31	Telephone Toll						.70
Aug.	7	Pay Roll			67.90			
"	4	Orr & Lockett					2.10	
"	3	Rittenhouse & Embree	523	9.94				
"	15	Montgomery & Frankhauser						15.00
"	11	Orr & Lockett					2.20	
"	14	Chicago Sash Door & Blind				145.00		
"	14	Pay Roll			29.50			
"	10	Rittenhouse & Embree	830	15.79				
"	20	Rittenhouse & Embree	149	3.20				
"	21	Pay Roll			56.90			
"	28	"			36.30			
"	21	South Halsted Street Iron						1.25
Sep.	2	Purdy & Cauble						500.00
"	4	Pay Roll			51.10			
"	8	Thomlinson & Riley						500.00
"	8	Purdy & Cauble						200.00
"	9	Chicago Sash Door & Blind				158.00		
"	9	Rittenhouse & Embree	396	8.50				
"	11	Pay Roll			45.90			
"	18	Pay Roll			59.90			
"	15	General Roofing Mfg. Co.						3.75
"	15	Rittenhouse & Embree	462	8.78				
"	17	Orr & Lockett					6.15	
"	23	Arthur Meagher						800.00
"	25	Pay Roll			39.10			
"	16	Rittenhouse & Embree	165	3.14				
"	20	Orr & Lockett					1.50	
"	30	Thomlinson Riley Co.						1,000.00
Oct.	2	Pay Roll			20.70			
"	2	Orr & Lockett					1.56	
"	7	Chicago Sash Door & Blind				50.00		
"	9	Pay Roll			28.78			
"	14	Standard Concrete						19.30
"	16	Pay Roll			9.00			
"	23	"			6.03			
"	25	Arthur Meagher						1,000.00
"	26	W. Balhatchet						800.00
Nov.	6	Pay Roll			40.56			
"	13	"			56.40			
"	16	Thomlinson & Riley Co.						400.00
"	20	Payroll			55.90			
"	22	General Roofing Mfg. Co.						9.54

			FEET	LUMBER PRICE	LABOR	MILLWORK	HDW.	MISC.
Nov.	27	Pay Roll			71.80			
"	30	Chicago Sash Door & Blind				300.00		
"	24	Rittenhouse & Embree	160	3.04				
"	27	Orr & Lockett					2.40	
"	30	General Roofing Mfg. Co.						15.22
Dec.	4	Pay Roll			123.75			
Nov.	26	Rittenhouse & Embree	1500	82.50	flooring			
"	30	"	1500	82.50	flooring			
Dec.	3	Orr & Lockett					2.40	
"	3	"					2.15	
"	10	Chicago Sash Door & Blind				500.00		
"	11	Pay Roll			161.50			
"	2	Rittenhouse & Embree	475	23.75	flooring			
"	3	"	1500	81.00	flooring			
"	7	"	1500	81.00	flooring			
"	11	Orr & Lockett					.97	
"	17	Arthur Meagher						1,000.00
"	18	Pay Roll			218.50			
"	21	Chicago Sash Door & Blind				500.00		
"	25	Pay Roll			207.00			
1910								
Jan.	3	Pay Roll			157.90			
"	10	Pay Roll			113.50			
"	6	Orr & Lockett					6.54	
"	15	Pay Roll			89.50			
"	15	Rittenhouse & Embree	600	12.60				
"	24	Pay Roll			55.90			
"	18	Orr & Lockett					1.40	
"	14	Rittenhouse & Embree	96	2.59				
"	29	Pay Roll			55.90			
Feb.	4	Thomlinson & Riley Co.						251.60
"	4	Purdy & Cauble						889.00
"	5	Pay Roll			71.50			
Jan.	22	Rittenhouse & Embree	48	.91				
"	25	"	50	2.75				
Feb.	10	Labor cleaning out						5.25
"	10	Labor keeping fire						3.00
"	7	Balhatchet						13.60
"	12	Pay Roll			82.30			
"	15	Standard Concrete Construction Co.						133.25
"	15	Wm. Balhatchet, same as above						53.75
"	16	Chicago Sash Door & Blind				200.00		
"	19	Pay Roll			106.05			
"	21	Arthur Meagher						500.00
"	23	Purdy & Cauble						200.00
"	24	Chicago Sash Door & Blind				200.00		

			FEET	LUMBER PRICE	LABOR	MILLWORK	HDW.	MISC.
Feb.	26	Pay Roll			82.30			
Mch.	5	Pay Roll			37.95			
"	5	Chicago Sash Door & Blind				200.00		
"	9	Otto Lind & Co.						142.00
"	12	Pay Roll			26.40			
"	12	Orr & Lockett					.73	
"	5	Rittenhouse & Embree	48	1.20				
"	19	Pay Roll			26.40			
"	21	Arthur Meagher						526.90
"	25	Chicago Sash Door & Blind				200.00		
"	26	Pay Roll			26.40			
Apr.	2	Pay Roll			6.00			
"	9	Pay Roll			16.80			
"	9	Lingosh Any <u>/?</u>						21.25
"	14	Chicago Sash Door & Blind				2,000.00		
"	5	Rittenhouse & Embree	420	8.42				
"	16	Pay Roll			16.80			
"	23	"			50.40			
"	20	Orr & Lockett					12.00	
"	30	Pay Roll			52.80			
May	6	United States Tile Co. Purdy & Cauble						405.01
Apr.	26	Orr & Lockett					13.62	
"	20	Rittenhouse & Embree		4.43				
May	7	Pay Roll			52.80			
"	14	"			52.80			
"	9	Orr & Lockett					12.00	
"	9	Rittenhouse & Embree	70	1.40				
"	16	Otto Lind & Co.						4.75
"	17	Chicago Sash Door & Blind				200.00		
"	21	Pay Roll			41.40			
"	27	Chicago Sash Door & Blind				200.00		
June	4	Pay Roll			11.10			
May	16	Orr & Lockett					.49	
"	17	"					.12	
"	17	"					.27	
"	24	"					4.17	
"	31	"					.48	
"	20	"					3.60	
"	16	Rittenhouse & Embree	109	3.05				
June	16	Balatchet						247.78
July	6	Chicago Sash Door & Blind				258.94		
"	11	Purdy & Cauble						249.59
Sep.	7	E. W. Maynard						80.00
Jan.	21	Chicago Sash Door & Blind				9.50		
TOTALS			52,880	1,224.51	3,968.49	3,651.44	124.26	17,598.41

Marginal notes:

1909

Aug. 21 Roughing finished  
Sep. 22 Ready for lathers  
Oct. 5 Electricians still working  
Oct. 26 Begun trimming

Prepared by Osmund Overby, Supervisory  
Architect and  
Larry J. Homolka, Historian  
National Park Service  
August 1963

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Robie House is one of the best known early works of Frank Lloyd Wright. It has been cited as a Landmark by the Commission on Chicago Architectural Landmarks: "In recognition of the creation of the Prairie House -- a home organized around the great hearth where interior space, under wide sweeping roofs, opens to the outdoors. The bold interplay of horizontal planes about the chimney mass, and the structurally expressive piers and windows, established a new form of domestic design."
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Asymmetrical plan; 154'-9" x 60'-0"; concrete footings below grade. No foundation wall. Two stories above raised basement.
2. Wall construction: Exterior walls are 2" x 12" reddish-orange brick, now with flush grey mortar joints. Capstones, lintels, sills, water table, etc., are of light grey stone resembling sandstone.
3. Structural system: The principal spanning members are steel I's and channels. The exterior decks are reinforced concrete supported on steel; the interior floors are wood joist construction bearing on steel. The wide projecting eaves are framed with principal members of steel with wood rafters resting on the steel. These channels are visible from access hatches in the soffit at the west end of the living room.

4. Porches, balconies, bulkheads: The bulkheads match the construction of the walls of the house itself. The porch and balcony floors are of reinforced concrete. Under the balcony at the south side of the living room the supporting cantilevered steel beams are partly visible.
5. Chimneys: The chimneys and the fireplaces are of the same brick as the exterior walls. No firebrick is used on the interior surfaces of the fireplaces.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The entrance door is made of oak stiles and rails with one large pane of plate glass set in wood stops.
  - b. Windows: Stiles and rails are of softwood. Exterior wood stops replace putty for holding glass in place. Most of the glass in each window is clear, fitted into a pattern created by the comes. Small panes of colored glass are used to highlight the pattern. Narrow pairs of french doors open almost all of the south wall of the living room and dining room to the balcony. The rest of the sash are casements, also swinging outward. Inside-mounted insect screens in oak frames were used for all windows. The only sash without comes are those in the kitchen and first adjoining servant's room.
7. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Hip roofs with low pitch and deep overhangs; the present roofing material is red clay tile with a lip at the lower edge. Stored in the furnace room are old flat, red tiles, 13" x 6", probably the former roofing material.
  - b. Eaves: A wide almost two feet-shallow copper gutter edges the level eaves. The under side of this gutter is of copper also. Downspouts are not practical on such extremely wide overhangs and are omitted, except where the overhang consists of the gutter alone. Soffits are level and plastered, except at the east overhang of the dining room where flat board and batten have been installed.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement floor: The entrance is at this level at the northwest corner of the house and opposite the chimney.

The billiard room and the playroom are partly separated by the chimney and the stairway which ascends to the principal level. At the east end of the house the three car garage is located.

- b. First floor: Living room and dining room occupy the west and east portions of the principal volume, with the chimney and the stairway from the basement separating the two spaces. A high opening in the chimney allows one to look from one space to another, and one can walk from one room to the other by passing either side of the fireplace. At the west, a porch extends the house under the wide projection of the roof. A narrow balcony with a built-in plant box follows along the south wall of this part of the house. A guest room occupies the space above the entrance hall, and west of the guest room are the stairs to the other bedrooms, the kitchen, and the servants' quarters. The latter are located above the garage.
  - c. Second floor: The master bedroom faces south and includes a bath and a dressing room with built-in wardrobes. Two other bedrooms and a bath are located along the north side of the house.
2. Stairways: Main stairway from entry on ground floor to principal floor above is of concrete. Other interior stairs are of wood construction.
  3. Flooring: Ground floor is concrete, now covered with a resilient material. Oak strips 2-1/4" wide are used in the rest of the house except in kitchen and bathrooms.
  4. Wall and ceiling finish: Sand finish plaster is typical throughout the house except in the kitchen and servants' rooms, where the walls appear to have been covered with smooth canvas and painted. Oak trim divides wall areas into panels. The chimney wall of the kitchen is faced with glazed white brick.
  5. Doorways and doors: Door frames are of oak in natural clear finish. The doors have solid oak stiles and rails with one large oak panel held in place with a molding having no curved surfaces.
  6. Decorative features and trim: At door-head height a 4-1/2 inch wide, flat band of trim is continuous around each room. This piece forms the head of all doors and windows. A nine inch high baseboard is used. Window and door jamb trim is narrower and thinner. This trim makes panels out of various wall areas, framing vertical edges of the panels at door and

window jambs and following along just above the baseboard and just under the band at door head height. All of this trim is oak. At the ceiling of the living room and dining room, the oak trim divides the surfaces into panels and integrates oak grilles for the air circulation system and the oak supports of the glass globe lighting fixtures into a unified design. Cabinetwork is of oak and makes use of oak plywood doors with some small horizontal bands of 3/16" sq. oak trim. The fireplaces and chimneys are of exposed brick, the same as the exterior of the building. The living room hearth and mantel are of grey limestone, and the hearth is depressed below the level of the floor. There are cast iron andirons in the fireplaces in the billiard room and the playroom that appear to be custom designed. Limestone hearths are used there also. The architectural forms are continued in the custom-designed and built-in furniture, most of which is now removed.

7. Notable hardware: Door knobs, roses, and key escutcheons are brass and octagonal in design.
8. Lighting: Lighting fixtures throughout the house were specially designed by Wright, and include large globes in brass fittings on the ground floor and third floor, large globes in wood fittings on the main floor, and recessed lights behind patterned grills on the main floor.
9. Heating and ventilating: Forced air ventilation over radiator combined with a supplementary air exhaust system. Present users note that second floor bedrooms are too hot in winter and in summer and that the cellar is cold in winter and damp in summer. The present heating system equipment is a replacement of the original, but appears to follow the same principles.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house is on a north-east corner lot, the long side of which faces south. The principal rooms face the street and the south. The narrow street-side of the lot faces west, toward Woodlawn Avenue, and the entrance to the house is from Woodlawn along the north side of the lot. The immediate neighborhood is that of the University of Chicago campus. Washington Park is near by, and Lake Michigan is about a mile to the east.
2. Outbuildings: None. The house and site are an integrated, three-dimensional composition.
3. Landscaping and walks, enclosures: The garden walls on the south and to the east of the house are constructed of

the same materials as the house and accomplish a gradual visual change from the open spaces of the site to the enclosed spaces of the building itself. Little landscaping is required. Plant materials in the urns on the south garden wall and in the various plant boxes built into the house also help unify the house and site.

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August 1963  
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August 1967

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